



PAT SHANNAHAN/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Lori Marquez (right) of Mesa and daughter Alyssa, 11, ride on the newly completed segment of the Red Mountain Freeway on Tuesday. The freeway opens to motorists on Monday.

Now is time to be planning for transportation needs

Vision is vital when it comes to planning for our future transportation needs. How far into the future can you see? What we have before us is something no fortune-teller can help us with, and no crystal ball can guide the way.

Thankfully, in the early 1980s the vision of the public, elected and business leaders, and transportation planners was clearly focused on the importance of building a viable network of freeways linking Valley communities.

In 1985, voters approved a half-cent sales tax to build freeways in the Valley, and now that plan is nearing completion. But it's not the finish line; it is the first leg of a marathon.

Victor Mendez

My Turn



On Monday, we will open the final segment of the Red Mountain Freeway. It represents the culmination of a 20-year partnership between the public, the Arizona Department of Transportation, cities and tribal governments, and the Maricopa Association of Governments. It is the final segment of Arizona's largest-ever public-works project. On a national scale, our progress is unprecedented.

The passage in 1985 of Proposition 300 made a regional freeway system possible. Before this additional funding our Valley freeway system consisted of only Interstate 17 and Interstate 10. Imagine what it would be like traveling around the Valley today without the regional freeways!

While the initial network of freeways is complete, Maricopa County voters in 2004 had the vision to approve a 20-year extension, providing money to fund diverse transportation solutions

including light rail, public transit, local streets, freeways and other improvements. As the Valley evolves, meeting our transportation needs requires a balanced approach that provides options for the public.

The needs do not end there, but through sustained partnerships with the community and residents of the region, we will continue to plan, build and maintain a premier transportation network that supports not only the Valley but the entire state.

Beyond the pavement that makes a roadway, we are building connections between people, communities and economies. With leadership from Gov. Janet Napolitano, ADOT continues to work with residents around the state to expand that vision, to create stronger connections between communities around the state and between regions.

Ours is a success story rooted in strong regional partnerships, innovation, collaboration with the community and vision. Now, let's continue that success — and begin thinking beyond the year 2025.

ADOT's recently completed Statewide Transportation Investment Strategy outlines our diverse statewide needs well into the future. Implementing this strategy will require leadership, courage, vision and diverse solutions to continue our aggressive quest to improve connections and secure our economic prosperity.

Don't worry about finding a crystal ball — a bright future begins with a clear, unified vision. Help us create that vision of transportation for Arizona's future.

The writer is director of the Arizona Department of Transportation.